

# **South Somerset District Council**

## **Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment Report**

**Review August 2021**



## **Important Information about the Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA)**

In order to avoid any unnecessary confusion, the Council would like to make the following disclaimer in relation to the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) and any other reports relating to its findings:

- The HELAA only identifies opportunities for housing and economic development on sites which are considered to be suitable, available and achievable/developable. It does not allocate sites to be developed. The allocation of sites for future housing or economic development will be identified through the preparation of Local Plans and Neighbourhood Development Plans.
- The identification of potential sites within the HELAA does not imply that planning permission would be granted if an application were to be submitted. The HELAA is a high level assessment. All planning applications will continue to be considered against the appropriate policies within the adopted Development Plan<sup>1</sup>, having regard to any other material considerations.
- The inclusion of potential sites within the HELAA does not preclude them from being considered for other uses.
- Site boundaries are based on the information available at the time of the assessment. The HELAA does not limit an extension or contraction of these boundaries for the purpose of a planning application.
- The HELAA includes sites suitable to accommodate five dwellings or more, or economic development of 0.25ha (or 500m<sup>2</sup> of floor space) and above. The exclusion of sites from the HELAA which fall below this threshold does not preclude the possibility of a planning application being submitted and later granted. Suitable sites (particularly small sites) for residential or economic development that have not been identified in the HELAA will continue to come forward through the usual planning process, including neighbourhood planning.
- The HELAA does not prevent other alternative sites coming forward for development.

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<sup>1</sup> S.38 (6) of Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states: *"If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise."*



## Summary of Key Findings

The key findings that have emerged from the 2021 HELAA Review are summarised below:

### Summary of Key Findings

- A total of 466 sites have been identified and assessed.
- 245 sites have been identified as suitable available and achievable.
- 194 housing sites with the potential to provide 10,619 dwellings have been identified as suitable, available and achievable.
- 27 mixed use sites with the potential to provide 3,130 dwellings and 343,696m<sup>2</sup> of floorspace for economic development have been identified as suitable, available and achievable.
- 24 sites for economic development with the potential to provide 248,002m<sup>2</sup> of floorspace have been identified as suitable, available and achievable.
- The assessment identifies sites with the potential to deliver a total of 1,292 dwellings in years 0-5 (this does not take account of the issue relating to phosphates on the Somerset Levels and Moors – see South Somerset District Council's web site for more information [Link](#) )

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) provides evidence that brings together important information related to future housing and employment land delivery in South Somerset. **This report summarises the conclusions of the Review of the HELAA in 2021; the methodology, site maps and completed site assessment forms are also available on the Council's website [here](#)**
- 1.2 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)<sup>2</sup> originally published by the Government in March 2014 and updated in July 2019, requires all Local Planning Authorities to undertake a Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) to establish realistic assumptions about the availability, suitability and the likely economic viability of land to meet the identified need for housing.
- 1.3 The PPG requires that the existing and future supply of land available for economic development should be assessed.
- 1.4 The assessment forms a key component of the evidence base to underpin policies in development plans for housing and economic development, including supporting the delivery of land to meet identified need for these uses. From the assessment, plan makers will then be able to plan proactively by choosing sites to go forward into their development plan documents to meet objectively assessed needs. The assessment is an important evidence source to inform plan making, but does not in itself determine whether a site should be allocated for development. This is because not all sites considered in the assessment will be suitable for development (e.g. because of policy constraints or if they are unviable). It is the role of the assessment to provide information on the range of sites which are available to meet need, but it is for the development plan itself to determine which of those sites are the most suitable to meet those needs.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-land-availability-assessment>

- 1.5 This report updates the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment 2018 (HELAA)<sup>3</sup>; will help to inform an update of the Employment Land Review (ELR)<sup>4</sup>; and supports the production of the Local Plan Review and the Council's five-year housing supply<sup>5</sup>.
- 1.6 The HELAA is a technical study, which identifies land with the potential for housing or economic development; and then assesses this land against a range of criteria and constraints. Its purpose is to:
- identify sites with the potential for housing and economic development uses;
  - assess their development potential;
  - assess their suitability for development and the likelihood of development coming forward (their availability and achievability, or deliverability);
  - provide information to assist in identifying whether there is an adequate five year supply of land for housing, identifying potential locations for strategic housing sites for at least the first 10 years of a plan and ideally 15 years; and
  - update a database of sites and their constraints, which can be readily extended.
- 1.7 The PPG makes it clear that the assessment should not be constrained by 'need'. It is therefore important that all potential land is identified in the first instance, providing a thorough audit before further consideration through the Local Plan process.
- 1.8 The HELAA is intended to be a database of sites, that can be reviewed and updated on a regular basis; and to some extent, should be considered as a "live" database of sites within the District. In the context of progressing the Review of the Local Plan, the 2018 HELAA needs to be reviewed and updated.
- 1.9 The HELAA integrates and links to this other evidence e.g. the Strategic Housing Market Assessment and the economic development monitoring and projections. It informs rather than determines the plan making process.
- 1.10 The South Somerset HELAA has been produced in accordance with the methodology published in 2020 and as set out in the PPG<sup>i</sup>.
- 1.11 The Council is producing other evidence base documents to support the Review of the Local Plan which integrates and links with the HELAA. The Local Housing Need

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/873236/helaa\\_final\\_report\\_feb\\_2017.pdf](https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/873236/helaa_final_report_feb_2017.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/882701/south\\_somerset\\_economic\\_development\\_monitoring\\_report\\_issue\\_for\\_website\\_100417.pdf](https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/882701/south_somerset_economic_development_monitoring_report_issue_for_website_100417.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/924446/combined\\_files.pdf](https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/924446/combined_files.pdf)

Assessment is derived from the Government's Standard Methodology as set out on its website<sup>6</sup>. The annual requirement for SSDC is now 725 dwellings per annum and this figure will be used during the Review and Adoption of the new Local Plan. However, in accordance with government guidance the Five-Year Housing Land Supply will be calculated on the basis of the Standard Methodology.

## **2. Next Steps**

- 2.1 This report will form part of the Council's evidence base. It provides a strong base from which to inform the next iteration of the five-year housing land supply and together with emerging evidence on Local Housing Need Assessments and the Employment Land Review, it will inform the Local Plan Review in terms of ensuring that there is a sufficient supply of land available to meet the District's future housing and employment needs.
- 2.2 In the future the database will be up-dated and sites will be added either through a call for sites, a formal request or through a desk top exercise. Given that circumstances are continually subject to change it is entirely possible that a site that is not available now may become so in the future or vice-versa or a site that is currently not achievable may become so.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments>



## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1: HELAA Methodology**

Please see separate document.

### **Appendix 2: Maps**

Please see separate document.

### **Appendix 3: Completed Site Assessment Forms**

Please see separate document.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-land-availability-assessment>